

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

BRIAN EDWARDS REYNOLDS,

Plaintiff,

-against-

FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS;  
MICHAEL CARVAJAL, Director of Bureau  
of Prisons; JOHN PETRUCCI, Former  
Warden of Otisville; PLILER, Warden F.C.I.  
Otisville; DAVID LEMASTER, Former  
Associate Warden; MS. ELMORE, Associate  
Warden; MR. SCHAEFLER, Camp  
Administrator, MS. GROVE, Associate  
Health Services Administrator; LINLEY,  
Medical Doctor,

Defendants.

21-CV-4763 (LTS)

ORDER TO AMEND

LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN, Chief United States District Judge:

Plaintiff, who is currently incarcerated at Otisville Correctional Facility, brings this *pro se* action under the Court's federal question jurisdiction, alleging that Defendants violated his constitutional rights. By order dated June 1, 2021, the Court granted Plaintiff's request to proceed without prepayment of fees, that is, *in forma pauperis*.<sup>1</sup> For the reasons set forth below, the Court grants Plaintiff leave to file an amended complaint within sixty days of the date of this order.

**STANDARD OF REVIEW**

The Prison Litigation Reform Act requires that federal courts screen complaints brought by prisoners who seek relief against a governmental entity or an officer or employee of a

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<sup>1</sup> Prisoners are not exempt from paying the full filing fee even when they have been granted permission to proceed *in forma pauperis*. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1).

governmental entity. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The Court must dismiss a prisoner’s *in forma pauperis* complaint, or any portion of the complaint, that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b); *see Abbas v. Dixon*, 480 F.3d 636, 639 (2d Cir. 2007). The Court must also dismiss a complaint if the court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).

While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the “strongest [claims] that they *suggest*,” *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted) (emphasis in original). But the “special solicitude” in *pro se* cases, *id.* at 475 (citation omitted), has its limits – to state a claim, *pro se* pleadings still must comply with Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which requires a complaint to make a short and plain statement showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.

The Supreme Court has held that under Rule 8, a complaint must include enough facts to state a claim for relief “that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). A claim is facially plausible if the plaintiff pleads enough factual detail to allow the Court to draw the inference that the defendant is liable for the alleged misconduct. In reviewing the complaint, the Court must accept all well-pleaded factual allegations as true. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009). But it does not have to accept as true “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action,” which are essentially just legal conclusions. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555. After separating legal conclusions from well-pleaded factual allegations, the Court

must determine whether those facts make it plausible – not merely possible – that the pleader is entitled to relief. *Id.*

## **BACKGROUND**

Named as Defendants in this complaint are the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), BOP Director Michael Carvajal, Former Warden of Otisville John Petrucci, Warden of Otisville Plier, Former Otisville Associate Warden David Lemaster, Associate Warden Ms. Elmore, Associate Warden Heuett; Camp Administrator Mr. Schaeffler, Associate Health Services Administrator Ms. Grove, Health Services Administrator Brian Walls, and Dr. Linley.

Plaintiff's allegations are as follows:

Injuries are sores on all areas of the body from scalp to toes with resulting itchiness even in sleep with resulting bleeding on bedding in morning. Constant discomfort resulting in increased stress. Unreliable psychology staff.

(ECF 2 at 5.) Plaintiff seeks money damages.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **A. Sovereign immunity**

Under the doctrine of sovereign immunity, the BOP is immune from suit. The doctrine of sovereign immunity bars federal courts from hearing all suits against the federal government, including suits against federal agencies, unless sovereign immunity has been waived. *United States v. Mitchell*, 445 U.S. 535, 538 (1980); *see Robinson v. Overseas Military Sales Corp.*, 21 F.3d 502, 510 (2d Cir. 1994) (“Because an action against a federal agency . . . is essentially a suit against the United States, such suits are . . . barred under the doctrine of sovereign immunity, unless such immunity is waived.”).

Thus, the Court dismisses Plaintiff's claims against the BOP under the doctrine of sovereign immunity. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(iii).

## **B. Federal Tort Claims Act**

The Court construes the complaint as asserting a claim for money damages under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA), 28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b), 2671-80. The FTCA provides for a waiver of sovereign immunity for injuries arising from the tortious conduct of federal officers or agents acting within the scope of their office or employment. *See* § 1346(b)(1). The only proper defendant for an FTCA claim is the United States of America. *See* § 1346(e); *see, e.g., Holliday v. Augustine*, No. 14-CV-0855, 2015 WL 136545, at \*1 (D. Conn. Jan. 9, 2015).

An FTCA claimant must exhaust his administrative remedies before filing suit in federal court by: (1) filing a claim for money damages with the appropriate federal government entity and (2) receiving a final written determination from that agency. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2675(a); *Phillips v. Generations Family Health Ctr.*, 723 F.3d 144, 147 (2d Cir. 2013). FTCA claims must be “presented in writing to the appropriate Federal agency within two years after such claim accrues” and an FTCA action must be commenced within six months of when the agency issues its final denial of administrative remedy. *Roberson v. Greater Hudson Valley Family Health Ctr., Inc.*, ECF 1:17-CV-7325, 17, 2018 WL 2976024, at \*2 (S.D.N.Y. June 12, 2018); *see* 28 U.S.C. § 2401(b). This exhaustion requirement is jurisdictional and cannot be waived. *Celestine v. Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Cir.*, 403 F.3d 76, 82 (2d Cir. 2005).

There are no facts in the complaint suggesting that Plaintiff filed an FTCA claim with the BOP for money damages, or that he received a final written determination from the BOP. The Court dismisses any FTCA claim without prejudice to Plaintiff’s filing an action asserting an FTCA claim against the United States after he has exhausted his administrative remedies.

### C. *Bivens* claims

Because Plaintiff alleges that employees of the federal government violated his constitutional rights, the Court construes his claims as arising under *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971). *See Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 675 (“[*Bivens*] is the federal analog to suits brought against state officials under [§ 1983].”) To state a claim for relief under *Bivens*, a plaintiff must allege facts that plausibly show that: (1) the challenged action was attributable to an officer acting under color of federal law, and (2) such conduct deprived him of a right, privilege, or immunity secured by the Constitution. *See Thomas v. Ashcroft*, 470 F.3d 491, 496 (2d Cir. 2006) (citing *Bivens*, 403 U.S. at 389).

*Bivens* relief is available only against federal officials who are personally liable for the alleged constitutional violations. *Ziglar v. Abbasi*, 137 S. Ct. 1843, 1860 (2017); *Turkmen v. Hasty*, 789 F.3d 218, 233 (2d Cir. 2015). The Fifth Amendment protects federal pretrial detainees from deliberate indifference to their serious medical needs. *See Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 122 (2d Cir. 2011) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 104 (1976)); *Darnell v. Pineiro*, 849 F.3d 17, 21 n.3 (2d Cir. 2017). To state a claim for inadequate medical care, a plaintiff must plead facts showing that (1) the deprivation of medical care is objectively “sufficiently serious” in light of a medical condition “that may produce death, degeneration, or extreme pain,” *Hill*, 657 F.3d at 122, and (2) “the defendant-official . . . intentionally . . . or recklessly failed to act with reasonable care . . . even though the defendant-official knew, or should have known,” that the alleged medical condition “posed an excessive risk to health or safety.” *Darnell*, 849 F.3d at 35; *see also Hill*, 657 F.3d at 122–23.

A plaintiff must also allege facts showing the defendants’ direct and personal involvement in the alleged constitutional deprivation. *See Spavone v. N.Y. State Dep’t of Corr.*

*Serv.*, 719 F.3d 127, 135 (2d Cir. 2013) (“It is well settled in this Circuit that personal involvement of defendants in the alleged constitutional deprivations is a prerequisite to an award of damages under § 1983.”) (internal quotation marks omitted). A defendant may not be held liable under *Bivens* solely because that defendant employs or supervises a person who violated the plaintiff’s rights. *See Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 676 (“Government officials may not be held liable for the unconstitutional conduct of their subordinates under a theory of respondeat superior.”). Rather, a plaintiff must plead and prove the elements of the underlying constitutional violation directly against the official.” *Tangreti v. Bachmann*, 983 F.3d 609, 620 (2d Cir. 2020).

Plaintiff does not explain exactly what occurred, and it is not clear if he is alleging that he was subjected to unconstitutional conditions of confinement, denied adequate medical care, or both. Moreover, the complaint does not contain facts showing how any of the named defendants were personally involved in violating Plaintiff’s constitutional rights. In fact, Plaintiff names defendants in the caption of the complaint, but the body of the complaint does not contain allegations against any of them. *See Iwachiw v. New York State Dep’t of Motor Vehicles*, 299 F. Supp.2d 117, 121 (E.D.N.Y. 2004) (“[W]here the complaint names a defendant in the caption but contains no allegations indicating exactly how the defendant violated the law or injured the plaintiff, a motion to dismiss the complaint in regard to that defendant should be granted”) (citations omitted)), *aff’d*, 396 F.3d 525 (2d Cir. 2005).

The Court grants Plaintiff leave to replead to provide facts detailing exactly what occurred and showing how the named defendants were personally involved in the deprivation of his constitutional rights.

#### **LEAVE TO AMEND**

Plaintiff proceeds in this matter without the benefit of an attorney. District courts generally should grant a self-represented plaintiff an opportunity to amend a complaint to cure its

defects, unless amendment would be futile. *See Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 123-24 (2d Cir. 2011); *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d 40, 42 (2d Cir. 1988). Indeed, the Second Circuit has cautioned that district courts “should not dismiss [a *pro se* complaint] without granting leave to amend at least once when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated.” *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000) (quoting *Gomez v. USAA Fed. Sav. Bank*, 171 F.3d 794, 795 (2d Cir. 1999)). Because Plaintiff may be able to allege additional facts to state a valid claim, the Court grants Plaintiff 60 days’ leave to amend his complaint to detail his claims.

Plaintiff is granted leave to amend his complaint to provide more facts about his claims. In the “Statement of Claim” section of the amended complaint form, Plaintiff must provide a short and plain statement of the relevant facts supporting each claim against each defendant. If Plaintiff has an address for any named defendant, Plaintiff must provide it. Plaintiff should include all of the information in the amended complaint that Plaintiff wants the Court to consider in deciding whether the amended complaint states a claim for relief. That information should include:

- a) the names and titles of all relevant people;
- b) a description of all relevant events, including what each defendant did or failed to do, the approximate date and time of each event, and the general location where each event occurred;
- c) a description of the injuries Plaintiff suffered; and
- d) the relief Plaintiff seeks, such as money damages, injunctive relief, or declaratory relief.

Essentially, Plaintiff’s amended complaint should tell the Court: who violated his federally protected rights and how; when and where such violations occurred; and why Plaintiff is entitled to relief.

Because Plaintiff's amended complaint will completely replace, not supplement, the original complaint, any facts or claims that Plaintiff wants to include from the original complaint must be repeated in the amended complaint.

### CONCLUSION

Plaintiff is granted leave to file an amended complaint that complies with the standards set forth above. Plaintiff must submit the amended complaint to this Court's Pro Se Intake Unit within sixty days of the date of this order, caption the document as an "Amended Complaint," and label the document with docket number 21-CV-4763 (LTS). An Amended Civil Rights Complaint form is attached to this order. No summons will issue at this time. If Plaintiff fails to comply within the time allowed, and he cannot show good cause to excuse such failure, the complaint will be dismissed for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

The Clerk of Court is directed to mail a copy of this order to Plaintiff and note service on the docket.

The Court certifies under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this order would not be taken in good faith, and therefore *in forma pauperis* status is denied for the purpose of an appeal. *Cf. Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444-45 (1962) (holding that an appellant demonstrates good faith when he seeks review of a nonfrivolous issue).

SO ORDERED.

Dated: June 7, 2021  
New York, New York

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/s/ Laura Taylor Swain  
LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN  
Chief United States District Judge



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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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Write the full name of each plaintiff.

\_\_\_\_ CV \_\_\_\_  
(Include case number if one has been assigned)

-against-

**COMPLAINT**  
(Prisoner)

Do you want a jury trial?

☐ Yes    ☐ No

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Write the full name of each defendant. If you cannot fit the names of all of the defendants in the space provided, please write "see attached" in the space above and attach an additional sheet of paper with the full list of names. The names listed above must be identical to those contained in Section IV.

**NOTICE**

The public can access electronic court files. For privacy and security reasons, papers filed with the court should therefore *not* contain: an individual's full social security number or full birth date; the full name of a person known to be a minor; or a complete financial account number. A filing may include *only*: the last four digits of a social security number; the year of an individual's birth; a minor's initials; and the last four digits of a financial account number. See Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5.2.

## I. LEGAL BASIS FOR CLAIM

State below the federal legal basis for your claim, if known. This form is designed primarily for prisoners challenging the constitutionality of their conditions of confinement; those claims are often brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (against state, county, or municipal defendants) or in a “*Bivens*” action (against federal defendants).

☐ Violation of my federal constitutional rights

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## II. PLAINTIFF INFORMATION

Each plaintiff must provide the following information. Attach additional pages if necessary.

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First Name	Middle Initial	Last Name
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State any other names (or different forms of your name) you have ever used, including any name you have used in previously filing a lawsuit.

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Prisoner ID # (if you have previously been in another agency’s custody, please specify each agency and the ID number (such as your DIN or NYSID) under which you were held)

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Current Place of Detention

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Institutional Address

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County, City	State	Zip Code
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## III. PRISONER STATUS

Indicate below whether you are a prisoner or other confined person:

☐ Pretrial detainee

☐ Civilly committed detainee

☐ Immigration detainee

☐ Convicted and sentenced prisoner

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. DEFENDANT INFORMATION

To the best of your ability, provide the following information for each defendant. If the correct information is not provided, it could delay or prevent service of the complaint on the defendant. Make sure that the defendants listed below are identical to those listed in the caption. Attach additional pages as necessary.

Defendant 1:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 2:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 3:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

Defendant 4:

First Name	Last Name	Shield #
Current Job Title (or other identifying information)		
Current Work Address		
County, City	State	Zip Code

## V. STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Place(s) of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_

### FACTS:

State here briefly the FACTS that support your case. Describe what happened, how you were harmed, and how each defendant was personally involved in the alleged wrongful actions. Attach additional pages as necessary.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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**INJURIES:**

If you were injured as a result of these actions, describe your injuries and what medical treatment, if any, you required and received.

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**VI. RELIEF**

State briefly what money damages or other relief you want the court to order.

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## VII. PLAINTIFF'S CERTIFICATION AND WARNINGS

By signing below, I certify to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief that: (1) the complaint is not being presented for an improper purpose (such as to harass, cause unnecessary delay, or needlessly increase the cost of litigation); (2) the claims are supported by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument to change existing law; (3) the factual contentions have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, will likely have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery; and (4) the complaint otherwise complies with the requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 11.

I understand that if I file three or more cases while I am a prisoner that are dismissed as frivolous, malicious, or for failure to state a claim, I may be denied *in forma pauperis* status in future cases.

I also understand that prisoners must exhaust administrative procedures before filing an action in federal court about prison conditions, 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a), and that my case may be dismissed if I have not exhausted administrative remedies as required.

I agree to provide the Clerk's Office with any changes to my address. I understand that my failure to keep a current address on file with the Clerk's Office may result in the dismissal of my case.

Each Plaintiff must sign and date the complaint. Attach additional pages if necessary. If seeking to proceed without prepayment of fees, each plaintiff must also submit an IFP application.

_____		_____	
Dated		Plaintiff's Signature	
_____		_____	
First Name	Middle Initial	Last Name	
_____			
Prison Address			
_____			
County, City		State	Zip Code

Date on which I am delivering this complaint to prison authorities for mailing: \_\_\_\_\_